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WASHINGTON, DC - U.S. Rep. Charlie Melancon today announced that he has signed on as a co-sponsor for H.R. 5539, which reauthorizes the North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA). First enacted in 1989, NAWCA has funded thousands of conservation projects that have protected millions of acres of wetlands in the United States. Before the August recess began, Melancon joined the House Resources Committee in voting unanimously for reauthorization of NAWCA.

"I am happy to support continuing this effective and vital conservation program," said Melancon.

"As a sportsman, I value protecting our fish and wildlife habitats. But as a Louisianian, I understand that conserving our coastal wetlands can be a matter of life or death."

Without the existing wetlands and coastal barriers, the impact of last year's hurricanes on Louisiana would have been far worse. According to the U.S. Geological Survey, for every 2.7 miles a hurricane travels across marshes and wetlands, the storm surge is reduced by one foot.

One of the country's most popular and effective conservation programs, NAWCA is a landowner friendly program that fosters the development of public-private partnerships to protect North America's migratory bird habitat. Since enactment in 1989, NAWCA has funded more than 1,500 conservation projects involving more than 3,200 partners. As a result, more than 23 million acres of wetlands and associated habitat has been protected, restored or enhanced in the United States, Canada and Mexico.

In Louisiana, NAWCA has helped fund projects that have conserved, restored, or enhanced **4 86,699 acres** of wildlife habitat - the third most in the country. Since 1990, Louisiana has received over **\$21.7 million** through NAWCA to fund conservation projects. This funding was used to leverage an additional

\$60.1 million

from private local partners, a ratio of almost 3 to 1, making NAWCA an effective use of taxpayer money.

The bill has the support of more than 40 non-profit groups who support the vitality of America's fish and wildlife, including Ducks Unlimited, Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation, The Nature Conservancy, the Wildlife Management Institute, and the National Rifle Association.

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